saalt
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS LEADING TOGETHER

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United States House Committee on the Judiciary
Hearing on Protecting Dreamers and Temporary Protected Status Recipients

March 6, 2019

Dear Chairman Jerrold Nadler, Vice-Chair Mary Gay Scanlon, and Committee Members,

I am Lakshmi Sridaran and I serve as the Director of National Policy and Advocacy for South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT). We are a national, non-partisan, non-profit organization that fights for racial justice and advocates for the civil rights of all South Asians. Our core policy priorities are in civil rights, immigration, and hate crimes. Along with the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSO), SAALT advocates for broad immigrant justice principles that address the needs of all South Asian Americans.

With nearly 5.4 million South Asians in the United States, immigrant justice is a top priority for our community. South Asian Americans possess a range of immigration statuses including Dreamers, TPS holders, undocumented immigrants, dependents and temporary workers, refugees and asylum-seekers, lawful permanent residents, and United States citizens. As of 2017, there are 630,000 undocumented Indians alone in the United States, marking a 72% increase in undocumented Indians since 2010. Additionally, as of August 2018, there are approximately 2,550 active Indian DACA recipients. Only 13% of the overall 20,000 DACA eligible Indians have applied and received DACA. There are 1,300 active Pakistani DACA recipients, 470 Bangladeshi recipients, 120 Sri Lankan recipients, and 60 Nepali recipients.

SAALT has worked closely with our partners at the national level, including United We DREAM, UndocuBlack Network, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and the National Korean American Service and Education Consortium (NAKSEC) to demonstrate the range of communities impacted by the Trump Administration's decision to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in September, 2017. Below, are the stories of two South Asian American DREAMers, Chirayu Patel and Ruchir, who have traveled to Washington, D.C. to support national efforts to pass a Clean DREAM Act since 2017, participated in press conferences and meetings with House Democratic leadership on Capitol Hill, and bravely shared their stories for wide audiences.

Chirayu Patel arrived in the U.S. on a visa at the age of 11 and has tried to resolve his status since 1994. He has paid his taxes, graduated from college, and received DACA status in 2012. With DACA, he was also able to start an organization that organizes educational conferences for over 1,000 high school students annually and allows him to work at a company that invests in underserved communities of Chicago. He is an outspoken activist and has continually asked policymakers to exercise their power and influence to pass a clean DREAM Act immediately.

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Ruchir has been working in Silicon Valley for over 13 years, at companies large and small, supporting their customers I.T. infrastructure in various capacities and contributing to America's economy. With the protection of DACA, he was able to get a bachelor's degree that has allowed him to provide for his family.

In April 2018, the Department of Homeland Security terminated temporary protected status (TPS) for Nepal, and visas are expected to expire to on June 24, 2019, just three years after granting TPS for Nepal following the devastating Gorkha earthquake. As a result, there are nearly 15,000 Nepali TPS holders who are at risk of losing their immigration status in just three months. Adhikaar, a member of the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSO), has led the struggle in campaigning for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) renewal for Nepal. In April 2018, Adhikaar successfully hosted a Congressional Briefing, calling on Members of Congress to support renewal of TPS for Nepal. Although the Trump Administration terminated TPS for Nepal, Adhikaar continues to advocate, organize, and fight for a permanent solution for Dreamers and TPS holders.

The Committee must ensure that clean DREAM and TPS legislation covers all TPS and DED holders, including those with the most recent designations like Nepal; creates a path to permanent residency or citizenship; and implements strong worker protections for all without increased enforcement spending. This means no funding for a border wall or increased border security, no smart wall, no funding for interior enforcement, no funding for detention beds or detention centers, and no mandatory e-verify.

We deem this administration's family separation policy and intent to declare a fake national emergency over a racist border wall dangerous and unconstitutional. This administration's larger anti-immigrant agenda is damaging to the safety and security of our communities. We call on the Committee to question the ethics and efficacy of these policies through further oversight hearings. We call on Congress to pass a clean DREAM and TPS Act immediately.